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SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP MEDIA COVERAGE OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S VISIT

REF: CAIRO 0065

¶1. (SBU) Following a week of negative media coverage, from government, opposition and independent newspapers alike, in the lead up to President Bush's January 16 visit to Egypt, all Egyptian TV channels - government and satellite - carried the joint POTUS-Mubarak press conference live and provided straightforward coverage as the lead prime time news story on January 16. Television talk shows that evening featured extensive discussion of the visit with political analysts but also replayed images from Israeli attacks in Gaza on January 16.

¶2. (SBU) Pro-government print media coverage highlighted President Bush's praise of Egypt's political reform, economic openness, and positive role of women, as well as President Mubarak's statement that the Palestinian issue is the key to regional peace and stability. Negative headlines appeared in the independent and sensationalist press. Leading independent daily Al Masry Al Yom described the summit as "cold," and highlighted public protests against the visit in Cairo and other Egyptian governorates. Protesters accused the Egyptian regime of "complacency with U.S and Zionist policy, aimed at shedding the blood of Arabs."

¶3. (SBU) On January 20, Al-Ahram carried an interview of the Ambassador with Salama Ahmed Salama which highlighted the success of the visit and the agreement between President Bush and President Mubarak to "manage disagreements." The same pro-government newspaper on January 18 carried a piece by Osama Saraya who argued that President Bush's visit underscored Egypt's continuing importance in regional affairs.

¶4. (SBU) Commentaries in all papers ranged from a neutral discussion of the bilateral relationship to a broad criticism of U.S. policy in the region, such as by editorialist Mohamed Abul Hadid in Al Gomhouriya: "Bush wants Arab support in continuing to occupy Iraq, attacking Iran, pressuring Palestinians, helping the American treasury by buying its weapons, and adopting the American life of democracy, etc. However, when we make a single request for the U.S. to pressure Israel to evacuate from Palestinian territories, he says he cannot. In fact, he would not."

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